

but the heart insensibly acquires an unison with many of the sentiments which *imply* those propositions, and are wrong unless those propositions be right. It forgets that a different state of feeling, corresponding to a greatly different scheme of principles, is appointed by the Sovereign Judge of all things as (with relation to *us*) an indispensable preparation for entering the eternal paradise;\* and that now, no moral distinctions, however splendid, are excellence in his sight, if not conformed to his declared standard. It slides into a persuasion that, under *any* economy, to be like one of those heathen examples should be a competent fitness for any world to which good spirits are to be assigned. The devoted admirer contemplates them as the most enviable specimens of his nature, and almost wishes he could have been one of them; without reflecting that this would probably have been under the condition, among many other circumstances, of adoring Jupiter, Bacchus, or Esculapius, and yet despising the deities that he adored; and under the condition of being a stranger to the Son of God, and to all that he has disclosed and accomplished for the felicity of our race. It would even throw an ungracious chill on his ardour, if an evangelical monitor should whisper, "Remember Jesus Christ," and express his regret that these illustrious men could not have been privileged to be elevated into Christians. If precisely the word "elevated" were used, the admonished person might have a feeling, at the instant, as if it were not the *right* word. But this state of mind is no less in effect than hostility to the gospel, which these feelings are practically pronouncing to be at least unnecessary; and therefore that noblest part of ancient literature which tends to produce it, is inexpressibly injurious. It had been happy for many cultivated and aspiring minds, if the men whose characters are the moral magnificence of the classical history, had been such atrocious villains, that their names could not have been recollected without execration. Nothing can be more disastrous than to be led astray by eminent virtue and intelligence, which can give a sense of congeniality with grandeur in the deviation.

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\* I hope none of these observations will be understood to insinuate the impossibility of the future happiness of virtuous heathens. But a question on that subject would here t>e out of place.